

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-18 remain pending in this application. Claims 7, 8, and 12 have been amended. New claims 13-18 have been added. No new matter has been introduced. Support for the amendments can be found, for instance, in the specification at page 4, lines 3-8; page 19, lines 11-15; and page 43, line 26 to page 44, line 9.

Priority

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgment of the claim for priority and safe receipt of the priority document.

35 U.S.C. §101

Claims 7, 8, and 12 have been amended to over the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §101.

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Miyamoto (U.S. Patent No. 5,768,129). These rejections are traversed as follows.

One feature of the present invention is to aggregate information of materials that have an impact on the environment (environmental impact information) in life stages of the product.

In general, aggregated environmental impact information is reported to the authorities concerned, and such a report should be prepared in accordance with a classification designated by a law or regulation (e.g., EuP directive: Directive on Eco-Design of Energy-using Products or the like).

The term "classification" is not defined as a physical classification relating to parts of the product or its production process (see specification at page 16, lines 14-18 and Fig. 5), but it is a virtual classification designated by a law or regulation (see specification at page 18, line 18 to page 19, line 22 and Fig. 7). However, such a virtually defined life stage is not sufficient to identify an environmental load. Thus, it is required to calculate and aggregate an environmental load emerged in the physical production process as an environment load of the virtual life stage.

In order to achieve the task discussed above, the present invention introduces a process in which each user (supplier of product) can define a physical production process and a virtual life stage independently by using a common basic process (see specification at page 43, line 26 to page 44, line 9 and Fig. 3). Furthermore, according to the present invention, an environmental load in each life stage can be aggregated by associating the physical production process and the virtual life stage in accordance with the basic process.

In contrast, Miyamoto discloses calculating the total environmental impact values of the product based on an environmental impact arisen in each process. “The input section 1 is used for inputting text information relating to the contents of each section, image information relating to the contents of each process, environmental impact factors arising in each process, and environmental impact values of each of the environmental impact factors.” Miyamoto at col. 4, lines 27-31.

The rejection of the claims appears to be based on the premise that the “life stage” in the claimed invention is functionally identical to the “process” of Miyamoto. However, the “process” in Miyamoto is believed to be a production process of the parts, and would correspond to a process relating to production of a part or the product of the present claims but not the life stage.

In short, Miyamoto merely discloses aggregating impact values for each “process,” and such an aggregation step is different from the claimed invention in which environmental loads are aggregated in association with production process and life stage.

Claims 1-12

Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12 are patentable over Miyamoto because, for instance, they each recite the following features not taught or suggested by Miyamoto: stage definition information on a life stage of a product which is defined by the supplier of the product and which comprises information on a basic process assigned to the life stage, wherein the basic process is from a plurality of basic processes that are defined by a

predetermined rule and that relate to the production of the product. Nothing in Miyamoto discloses or suggests defining the stage definition information by the supplier of the product and assigning a basic process to a life stage. The processes of the product in Miyamoto are not the same as or equivalent to the life stages in the claimed invention. For at least the foregoing reasons, claims 1-12 are patentable over Miyamoto.

Claims 13-18

Applicants respectfully submit that new dependent claims 13-18 are further patentable over Miyamoto because, for instance, Miyamoto does not teach or suggest that the life stages of the product are each a component process of a life cycle of the product and are each defined by the supplier of the product by assigning a basic process from among the plurality of basic processes to the life stage. Miyamoto further fails to teach or suggest that the plurality of basic processes as defined by the predetermined rule are common to different suppliers.

The claimed features solve previous problems in the art. “As a result, even if definitions of life stages are different between makers, environmental load information of a process employed by a supplier for himself can be incorporated into a life stage that is defined by a maker and corresponds to that process of the supplier. Thus, even if definitions of life stages of products are different between makers, it is not necessary for a supplier to register data of input and discharge in each life stage for each maker.” Specification at page 44, lines 2-9. The use of basic processes common to the users to define the life stages solves the problems

presented by the previous need for a supplier to register input/discharge data in each life stage in advance for each maker. Specification at page 3, lines 18-22; and page 4, lines 3-8. These claimed features are clearly not taught or suggested in Miyamoto.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. Please charge any shortage of fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, or credit any overpayment of fees, to Deposit Account 50-1417.

Respectfully submitted,

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